

# Peace Corps | Service Later in Life



Older Peace Corps Volunteers have a wealth of life skills, professional experience, and tested maturity that prepares them to make lasting impacts on communities around the world. While the average age of Peace Corps Volunteers today is 28, 8 percent of current Volunteers are age 50 or older. Peace Corps service is a great way for older Americans to continue their careers and utilize their life experiences in a nontraditional environment.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Is there an upper age limit to Peace Corps service?

There is no upper age limit to Peace Corps service. The oldest Volunteer currently in service is 80.

### Can I serve with my spouse?

Married couples may serve in the Peace Corps together, but each person must apply and qualify as a Volunteer separately.

### How can I best maintain my home and financial affairs while overseas?

You may want to discuss with an attorney the possibility of giving power of attorney to a relative or friend to handle your financial matters while you serve in the Peace Corps. You might also consider having an accountant or tax service prepare your income taxes while you are overseas. Note that your monthly living allowance and readjustment allowance are considered taxable income, so W-2 forms will be sent to your Peace Corps worksite. You can either file from overseas or send them home, along with other income records, to be filed by someone else.

### Is the medical evaluation process different for older applicants?

The medical evaluation process is the same regardless of an applicant's age. However, the medical assessment process may take longer for applicants with more involved health histories. Older applicants should closely review the Living Conditions and Medical Considerations sections of a particular Volunteer opportunity before submitting an application.

### How will my age affect my Peace Corps service?

Each Volunteer experience is unique but there are some age-based differences that older Volunteers may encounter. In many cultures, older members of society are viewed and treated with a great deal of respect. You may have access to individuals and insights within the community that are not available to younger peers. Additionally, younger Volunteers may look to older Volunteers for advice and support. While some find this to be an enjoyable experience, others choose not to fill this role. Older Volunteers might also have more difficulty learning a new language and can request an individualized approach to language learning during pre-service training.

### Can I receive my federal retirement benefits while I am overseas?

Yes, provided you retire from federal service before beginning your Peace Corps service. If you meet the age and other requirements for retirement from your agency while serving as a Volunteer, you can apply for your annuity at any time from that point forward. Receiving a retirement annuity has no impact on your Peace Corps living stipend.





### **Will Peace Corps service affect my Social Security retirement benefits?**

The Social Security Administration determines whether, or how, your benefits will be affected while you serve as a Volunteer. The readjustment allowance and a small percentage of the monthly living allowance you receive constitute earnings for Social Security purposes. Social Security and Medicare tax payments are deducted from your readjustment allowance.

### **I'm a federal employee. Can I retire and then serve in the Peace Corps? Can I return to federal service when I finish serving in the Peace Corps?**

Yes, you can do either. Some people serve in the Peace Corps directly after they retire from federal employment; others serve in the Peace Corps and then return to their previous job or find another federal job. However, there are no provisions guaranteeing current federal employees their positions in the government if they become a Peace Corps Volunteer. Before resigning you should look into the possibility of being placed on leave without pay for the duration of your Peace Corps service. It is up to your employer whether or not you can be rehired after a leave of absence.

*“At 73 years old and a mother of three and grandmother of seven, it feels amazing to finally live this part of my life that I postponed in the 1960s. I am contributing in a greater way now than I could have then. My extra life experience has given me the ability to see situations from a different perspective than I would have as a 20-something.”*

Elaine Sweet  
Volunteer in the Philippines

*“Older Peace Corps Volunteers bring valuable experiences to their service, both life experiences and occupational experiences. I applied for Peace Corps after owning an architecture firm for more than 30 years and my professional input was respected among my peers.”*

Michael Dixon  
Volunteer in Ukraine

***Make a difference.  
Be a Volunteer.***



peacecorps.gov | 855.855.1961